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Study on Equal Rights Between Men and Women

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Abstract

The principle of equality should regulate relations between men and women in both private and public life. Socialization in public institutions gender influenced characteristic, which may or may not overlap over the traditional model. The research aims to identify students at USAMV Bucharest views on equality between women and men, the significance of equality, which is the „dominating” factor within the family or in society. The research was conducted at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest on a research sample group of 375 respondents. Research results showcase that respondents consider that in Romania there is no real equality of rights between men and women and gender segregation is far-reaching, in the sense of a patriarchal role. On this background, there is an urgent need to implement gender policies that promote an egalitarian model that encourages a partnership within the family and in society.

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1. Introduction

Communist ideology in Romania took the Bolshevik approach on several themes, in which we find the „woman issue” as well (Zamfir and Zamfir, 2000). From the state’s perspective, woman’s role in society had the same duplicity as it was implied in that of the family’s equality within a marriage (Betea, 2005). Thus, as far as dividing domestic tasks is concerned, the traditional customs were maintained, in which the role of the woman was to fulfill on her own all the tasks concerning the upbringing and education of children, as well as taking care of the

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household. The standard of living was somewhat improved, but the rural based traditional models still prevailed (Gal and Kligman eds., 2000).

In the public eye, gender equality was achieved through the participation of women on the labor market, through the constitutional right and obligation to have a job, just like the men. Also, the women ensured a certain quota of participation in politics. Nevertheless, their presence and participation was however strictly symbolic, since decisions were taken from the upper echelon downwards, limiting their role to a pure propaganda form (Neculau, 2004).

What embodied the communist regime and its system was the promotion of a „double moral” (Voicu, 2005) which was subsequent to the existence of two parallel worlds: one fabricated by the party ideology and promoted through public „wooden tongue” speaking and preaching, and the real one, of shortages and hardships.

The post-December 1989 era created the opportunity of redefining gender equality in the sense of fulfilling each other’s potential to the maximum, regardless of gender. On an individual level, gender was defined both socially and culturally, transforming the social to „natural” in the process. Gender cannot be associated strictly to the cultural meanings normally attributed to the biological differences (Stoian *et al*, 2015). A social reconstruction of gender highlights the generalization and hierarchy of differences assigned to both man and woman categories. In this context, gender identity must be based on similarities and individualities rather than exclusive differences (Grunberg, 2002).

2. Materials and Methods

The research was conducted at the University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest on a research sample group of 375 respondents. The data collection timeframe was June 1st to July 31st, 2014. The research group comprises 162 female students and 213 male students, with a representative distribution over all the faculties and their components (Agriculture, Zoology, Veterinary Medicine, Horticulture, Biotechnology and Management). In studying the appreciation and perception of gender equality between men and women we used the following items: Gender equality in all walks of social life (what is permitted to a man is permitted to a woman as well); Equal labor rights for both genders; The appreciation of know-how, showing an equal amount of validation to men and women alike; Equality in obligations / proportionately covering obligations (for example, proportionately dealing with domestic activities); Equality within the family (both parties are on the same level, taking decisions in equal measure); Equality in expressing one’s opinion; Equality in the right to choose and making decisions; Both women and men contribute (in equal measure) to the welfare of the family; Equality in partaking in both political or social life.

Processing and interpretation of questionnaire data and findings was done with the Statistical Package for the Social Program IBM SPSS 10.0 Sciences. In this program the following methods were applied: *Descriptive Statistic – Frequencies; Descriptive Statistic – Crosstabs; Bivariate Correlation*.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Single variation statistical analysis of the database

Respondents believe that in Romania there is no real gender equality between men and women (54.93%), while only 35.47% believe the opposite (Table 1).

Table 1. The frequency of answers to the question „In your opinion, is there a real gender equalit between men and women in Romania?”

	%
Yes	35.47
No	54.93
DK/DA	9.60

Source: own SPSS processing

Male students believe to a greater extent that female students (+11.18%) that there is a real gender equality between men and women in Romania, meanwhile female students view the opposite (+8.45%) (Figure 1).

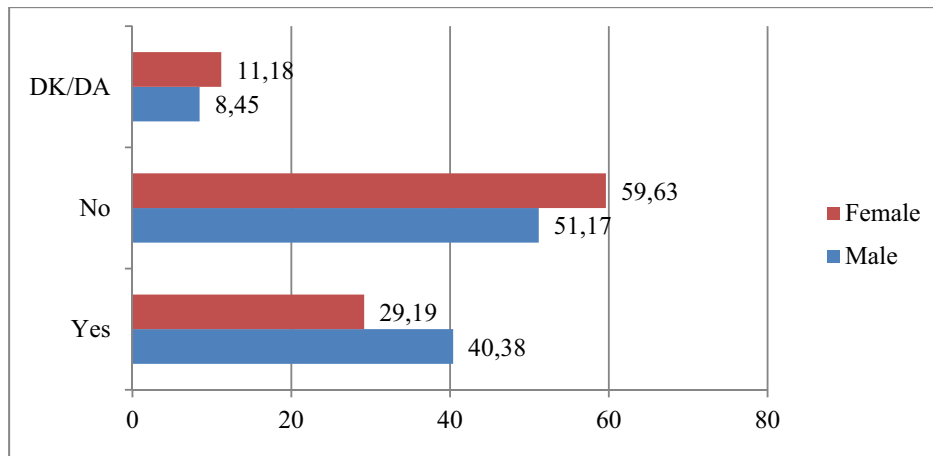


Fig. 1. The frequency of answers to the question „In your opinion, is there a real gender equality between men and women in Romania?” in relation to gender

Equality of rights between men and women implies the equality of rights in all aspects of social life (a behavior that is admissible for a man should be admissible for a woman as well) (71.73%), labor rights equality (62.40%), family equality (both within the couple are on equal grounds, both taking decisions in equal measure) (61.60%), appreciation of skills and knowledge, validating women just as much as validating men (60.27%), both man and woman contribute equally to the wellbeing of the family (59.73%), equal social participation rights (58.13%) (Table 2).

Table 2. The frequency of answers to the question „What does gender equality mean in your point of view?”

Items	Yes	No
Gender equality in all aspects of social life (what is permitted to a man is permitted to a woman as well)	71.73	28.27
Equal labor rights for both genders	62.40	37.60
The appreciation of know-how, showing an equal amount of validation to men and women alike	60.27	39.73
Equality in obligations / proportionately covering obligations (for example, proportionately dealing with domestic activities)	50.67	49.33
Equality within the family (both parties are on the same level, taking decisions in equal measure)	61.60	38.40
Equality in expressing one's opinion	61.87	38.13
Equality in the right to choose and making decisions	62.13	37.87
Both women and men contribute (in equal measure) to the welfare of the family	59.73	40.27
Equality in partaking in both political or social life	58.13	41.87

Source: own SPSS processing

In being the head of the family, gender is irrelevant to 62.13% of the respondents, while 30.13% of them prefer that men lead, and for 1.33% of them, a woman leading is the desired option (Table 3).

Table 3. The frequency of answers to the question „Do you think that in family should lead....”

View	%
Preferably men should lead	30.13
Preferably women should lead	1.33
Gender doesn't matter	62.13
DK/DA	6.40

Source: own SPSS processing

Female students in particular support the view that gender shouldn't matter (+16.49%), while especially the male students believe that men should lead within the family (+22.51%) (Figure 2).

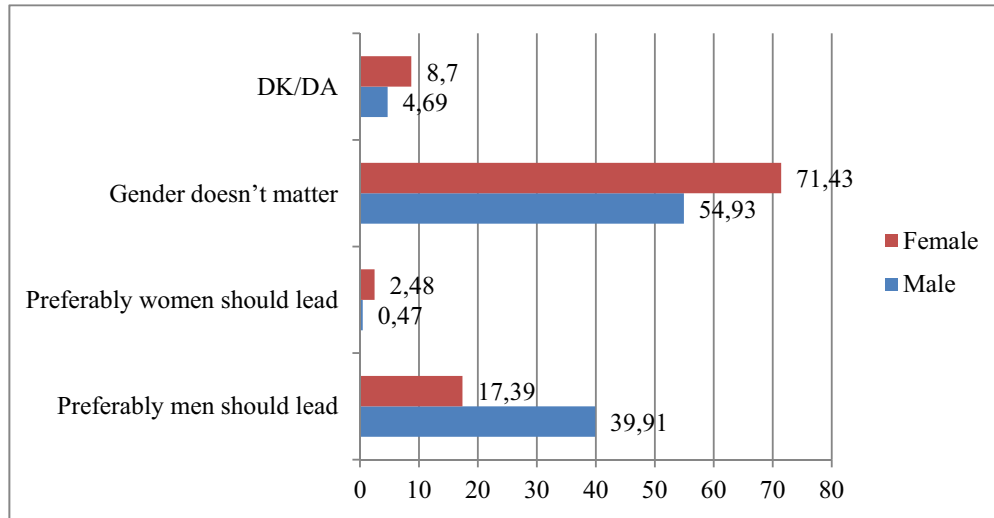


Fig. 2. The frequency of answers to the question „Do you think that...”, according to gender

The replies and answers show the existence of two family sphere interaction patterns: a model based on equality and dividing responsibilities of decision making evenly and the patriarchal model, likely a consequential follow up to the family roots concept. Regardless the approach, a clear segregation in relation to gender is showcased. An egalitarian evolution within the family is desired more profoundly by the female students. On the other side, male students would rather maintain the patriarchal model in which the man has the final say in most if not all important matters.

According to our respondents, in the public life, at the workplace, in politics, administration, and so on, gender doesn't matter. What counts are the professional skills and aptitudes of the person in charge (76.67%). Regardless, a different stance is the view that a man should lead (20.80%), while contrary to popular belief, only a small fraction of respondents (2.13%) support a woman's leadership role (Table 4).

Table 4. The frequency of answers to the question „What about in public life: at the workplace, in politics or administration, and so on...”

View	%
Preferably men should lead	20.80
Preferably women should lead	2.13
Gender doesn't matter, what counts are the professional skills of the person in charge	74.67
DK/DA	2.40

Source: own SPSS processing

From a gender perspective, mostly the male students claimed that in public life aspects, at the workplace, in politics and/or administration, it's preferable that men lead (+16.99%) (Figure 3).

In a much greater extent female respondents declare gender shouldn't be an issue or a prerequisite, focusing solely on the professional skills of the person in charge (12.97%)(Figure 3).

We can ascertain from the answers above that there is a higher degree of egalitarian positioning in the public sphere compared to the private one. Even so, taking all of this into account, the rules of the patriarchal model are still assimilated in society at large, through the rooted belief, spread among male students, that male leadership is, in the long run, more beneficial than the alternative.

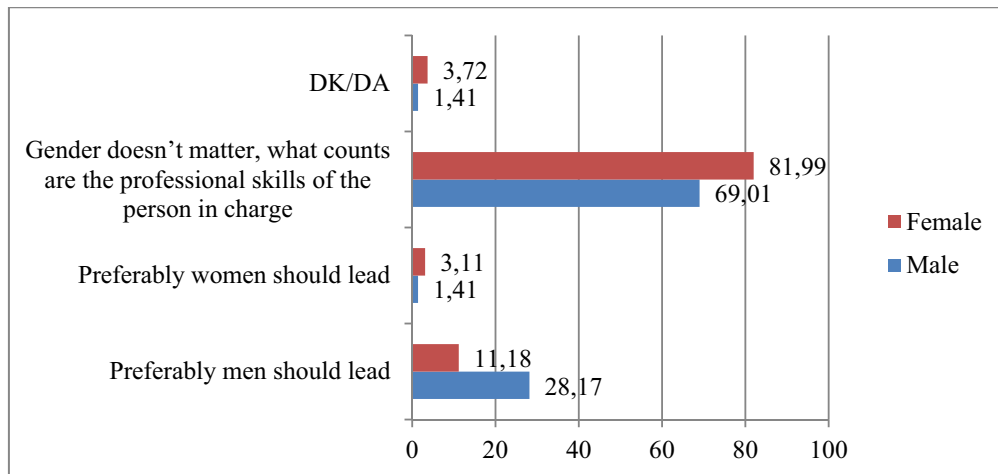


Fig. 3. The frequency of answers to the question „What about in public life: at the workplace, in politics or administration, and so on...”, based on gender

Thusly, women are more likely concerned with a better melding of family and work and reaching a balance (55.73%), or focusing more on their family (24.80%) or more on their career (6.13%) (Table 5).

Table 5. The frequency of answers to the question „In your opinion, in Romania, what are women more preoccupied of?”

In your opinion, in Romania, what are women more preoccupied of (%)	
1. Work	6.13
2. Family	24.80
3. Balancing work and family life	55.73
4. Neither work nor family	2.13
5. Others...	5.87
DK/DA	5.33

Source: own SPSS processing

Male students proceed on the assumption that women are likely more preoccupied of family affairs (+17.49%), while female students are more sympathetic to the notion of work and family life balance (+24.03%) (Figure 4).

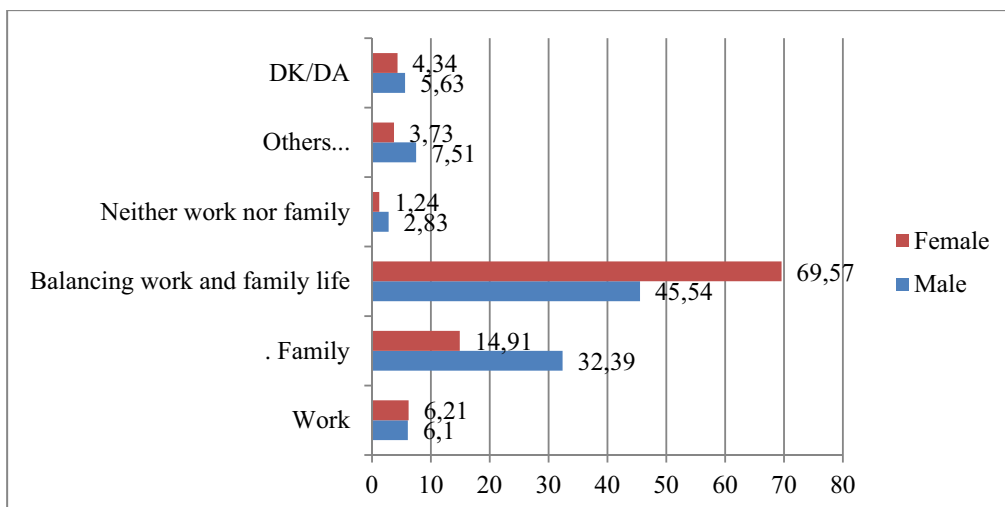


Fig. 4. The frequency of answers to the question „In your opinion, in Romania, what are women more preoccupied of?” according to gender

On the other hand, the men are more preoccupied with work (44.27%), establishing a good work and family life balance (38.93%), neither with work or family life (4.80%) and strictly of family matters (2.93%) (Table 6).

Table 6. The frequency of answers to the question „What about the men, what are they more preoccupied of?”

What about the men, they more preoccupied of... (%)	
1. Work	44.27
2. Family	2.93
3. Balancing work and family life	38.93
4. Neither work nor family	4.80
5. Others...	4.80
DK/DA	4.27

Source: own SPSS processing

Female students believe to a significantly higher degree that men are more preoccupied with work (+4.33%), while male students claim that men are more likely to focus on achieving a work and family life balance (+9.65%), taking precedence over anything else (Figure 5).

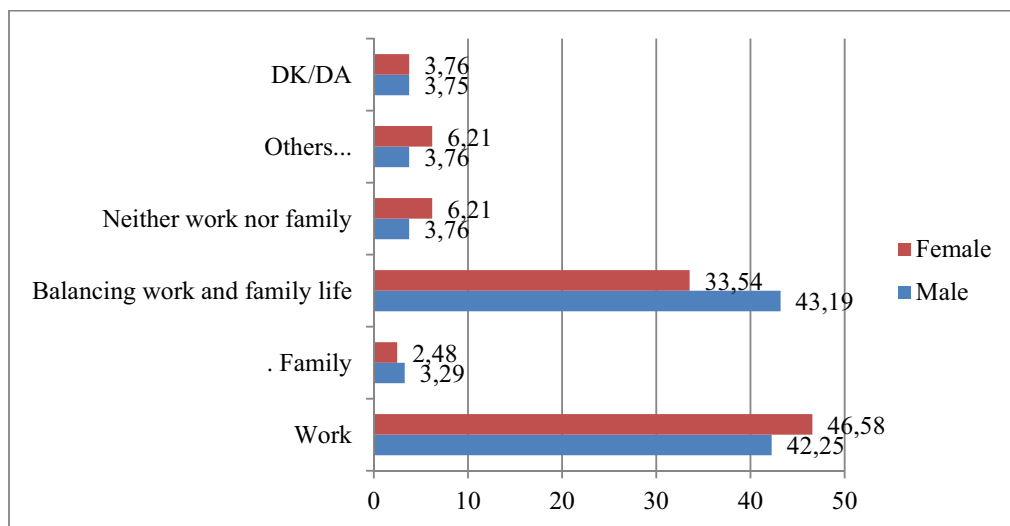


Fig. 5. The frequency of answers to the question „What about the men, what are they more preoccupied of?” according to gender

Respondents opinions manifest, in this situation as well, a gender segregation in accordance to the patriarchal model: *Female students* believe that the men are more focused on work, prior to anything else, while male students claim that men are more likely to strive in achieving a work and family life balance; Following their answers, we can observe that *male students* share an encompassing belief that women are more preoccupied with family matters, while the female students concur on the more stringent desire to better balance work and family life.

3.2. Variables association evaluation regarding perception of equal rights between men and women

Analyzing the variables concerning the perception of equal rights between men and women as a concept, through their association with the gender of the respondents, showcases the existence of significant statistical correlations:

- gender and equal rights among men and women when it comes to the appreciation of know-how, validating women in the same measure as men ($\chi^2 = 4.879$, $p = .027$; very weak direct correlation, $\text{coef.} = .114$, $p < .027$) – there is a significant difference between genders, the validation of women through know-how appreciation being considered less important by the female students;

- gender and equal rights among men and women when it comes to family life equity ($\chi^2 = 3.895$, $p=.048$; very weak direct correlation, $\text{coef}=.102$, $p<.049$) – *there is a significant difference between genders, as equal family rights is considered less important by the female students;*
- gender and equal rights among men and women concerning decision making equality ($\chi^2 = 7.038$, $p=.008$; very weak direct correlation, $\text{coef}=.137$, $p<.008$) – *there is a significant difference between genders, as equal decision making rights is considered less important by the female students;*
- gender and leadership within the family ($\chi^2 = 22.011$, $p=.001$; very weak inverted correlation, $\text{coef}=-.092$, an insignificant degree) – *there is a significant difference between genders, female students believing to a higher degree that gender does not matter, while male students consider it's preferred that a man leads in family aspects;*
- gender and leadership within public life ($\chi^2 = 14.921$, $p=.001$; very weak inverted correlation, $\text{coef}=-.204$, $p<.001$) – *there is a significant difference between genders, female students considering, to a greater extent, that gender does not matter, emphasizing on professional skills, while male students consider it's preferred that a man assumes the leadership role.*

4. Conclusions

During the communist era the public sphere was one of false pretenses, fabricated reality and of formal official declarations that had nothing to do with the true social reality. In the public eye, gender equality was achieved through involving women in the labor market and party structures, but only for a symbolic purpose, as decision making was still out of their reach. Within the private life aspects, patriarchal norms, typical of rural areas, were preserved, in which a woman's role of household keeper and focused more exclusively on family life was predominate.

The post-December timeframe allowed for the opportunity of redefining gender equality in both the public and private spheres.

Respondents believe that in Romania there is no real gender equality between men and women. Thus opinions vary, showing a segregation on gender nuances.

Equal rights within the family is considered more important by the female students, while male students believe that the man should have the final say within family affairs.

The validation of women when it comes to appreciating their skills is considered more important by the female students, while yet again, male students focus more on the claim that a man should assume the leadership role.

Respondents embrace the traditional model within the family. Unfortunately not even formal education provides content that educates the youth on the values of gender equality. In consequence, the traditional way is self-replicating with very few variations and influences passing through from the innovative model, a situation common in private life as well.

On an individual level, both society and family is made up of women and men that live in parallel worlds: the woman's role in the family is perceived as „natural” by males, with them taking the predetermined responsibilities of their specific role of earning and managing income. Furthermore, they assume the gender role defined stance without questioning its appositeness.

This is why it is very necessary to define, enrich and disseminate through specialized institutions, a cultural model that society can adopt and adapt to, promoting a definition of gender relations that encourages a partnership on equal terms within the family or public life. Also mandatory will be the reconstruction of institutions that sanction these relations through gender egalitarian policies.

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